

May 11, 2004

TO: The EQB General List, Local Officials, Property Owners and Persons interested in the Xcel Energy Project which includes 345 kV Transmission Line from the Split Rock Substation near Brandon, South Dakota to the Lakefield Junction Substation near Lakefield Minnesota, a new Nobles County Substation near Reading, Minnesota and a 115 kV Transmission Line from the new Nobles County Substation to the Chanarambie Substation near Lake Wilson, Minnesota
MEQB DOCKET NO. 03-73-TR-XCEL

RE: Notice of Xcel Energy Filing of Route Permit Application with EQB

Northern States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy, proposes to construct a 345 kV transmission line and associated facilities connecting the Split Rock Substation in Minnehaha County, South Dakota to the Lakefield Junction Substation in Jackson County, Minnesota. Included in this application are a new substation in Nobles County near Reading, Minnesota and a 115 kV line from the new substation to the Chanarambie substation in Murray County (the Project). The Project is designed to increase outlet capability for the Buffalo Ridge area to allow for further development of wind energy in the region.

Under the Power Plant Siting Act (Minnesota Statutes, Sections 116C.51-.69) a route permit from the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) is required to build a large high voltage transmission line (HVTL). On April 30, 2004 Xcel Energy submitted an application (Application) to the EQB for a routing permit pursuant to the full permitting process contained in Minn. Rules parts 4400.1025 to 4400.1900, and Minn. Stat. § 116C.57. After an extensive public process, the EQB will issue a route-permit permit that specifies the final routes and structures Xcel Energy can use for the new transmission lines.

The EQB has adopted rules for the administration of transmission line route permits (Minnesota Rules Chapter 4400). The EQB rules establish the requirements for submitting and processing a route permit application. The applicant must identify in the application its preferred route for the transmission line.

Depending upon the final route, the new 345 kV transmission line will be approximately 90 miles in length. The 115 kV transmission line will be approximately 40 miles in length. A map showing the general area of Xcel Energy's proposed routes is attached as Exhibit A.

The EQB will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) before issuing the route-permit. To help determine what impacts and routes to study in the EIS, the EQB will seek comments from the public and will hold public meetings within 60 days of the EQB's acceptance of the Application. The EQB is holding four initial public meetings for this project. These meetings will use an open-house format in which you are invited to review Xcel Energy's Application and proposed routes, learn more about the EQB permit process, and ask questions. These meetings will also serve as EIS "scoping" meetings where you can propose additional routes to be considered for the new transmission lines and comment on what issues should be addressed in the EIS. You are welcome at anytime during the hours of the open-house meetings. If you cannot attend one of the open-house meetings, you can also contact the EQB project manager at the number provided below.

The date of the EQB open-house public meetings and locations are as follows:

Tuesday, June 1, 2004
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
American Legion
413 Main St. (North end)
Lakefield, MN

Wednesday, June 2, 2004
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wilmont Community Center
316 4th Ave., Wilmont, MN

Wednesday, June 9, 2004
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Chandler City Hall
241 4th St.
Chandler, MN

Thursday, June 10, 2004
3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Rock County Community Library (Luverne)
201 W. Main Street
Luverne, MN

Once the EIS is complete, the EQB will hold a public hearing before making the final route-permit decision. The EQB is required to grant or deny the requested permit within twelve months from the date the EQB accepts the Application.

After the EQB issues the route permit, Xcel Energy will negotiate where possible with landowners for the purchase of all required right-of-way. There may be circumstances where Xcel Energy may be required to exercise the power of eminent domain to acquire property for the Project in accordance with its authority under state law. See Minn. Stat. § 116C.63.

A certificate of need is required for this Project. The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission granted a certificate of need for this project on March 11, 2003 and a copy of the order is available on the EQB web site.

The Chair has designated EQB staff members John Wachtler as project manager and George Johnson as the public advisor in this matter. Inquiries about this project should be directed to the EQB project manager, John Wachtler (Tel: 651-296-2096 or john.wachtler@state.mn.us) or George Johnson, (Tel: 651-296-2888 or george.johnson@state.mn.us) Environmental Quality Board, 300 Centennial Bldg., 658 Cedar Street, St. Paul, MN 55155. Other contact information: Toll-Free Tel: 1-800-657-3794, Fax: 651-296-3698 or TTY: Minnesota Relay Service, 800-627-3529, and ask for the EQB. Project related materials, including the permit application and an on-line discussion forum, are available at: www.eqb.state.mn.us. Click on "Xcel Split Rock to Lakefield Junction 345/115 Powerlines" near the bottom of the "Open Projects" list. Any person may request to have his or her name or an organization's name placed on the project contact list by registering online at the EQB web site or by contacting Andrea at the EQB at 651-296-2571.

Current information about the Project and a copy of the Permit Application is also available online at www.xcelenergy.com. Click on the "About Energy" button on the Home Page and then select "Transmission Projects". Copies of the Permit Application will also be available at the following public libraries after May 25, 2004: Rock County Community Library (Luverne), Adrian Library, Nobles County Library (Worthington), Jackson County Library (Lakefield), Fulda Memorial Library, Slayton Public Library and Chandler City Hall.

Project information may also be obtained by emailing pamela.jo.rasmussen@xcelenergy.com or writing to Pam Rasmussen at 1414 W. Hamilton Avenue, P.O. Box 8, Eau Claire, WI 54702-0008 or by calling Ms. Rasmussen at 1-800-238-7968 or accessing the Xcel Energy web site at www.xcelenergy.com, Click on About Energy, then Transmission Projects.

